1796

AN N. Paine to N. Chas

ORATION,

PRONOUNCED AT *WORCESTER*,

ON THE

ANNIVERSARY OF AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE;

JULY 4, 1796.

BY FRANCIS BLAKE, ESQ.

PRINTED AT Worcester, MASSACHUSETTS
BY THOMAS, SON & THOMAS,
SOLD BY THEM AT THEIR WORCESTER BOOKSTORE.——JULY, A. D. 1796.

BRITISH MUSEUM

AT a MEETING *of a numerous body of* CITIZENS, *at* WORCESTER, *on the* FOURTH *of* JULY, A. D. 1796, *for the purpose of celebrating the* DAY—*A committee, being appointed to convey their thanks to* FRANCIS BLAKE, ESQ. *for his animated and patriotic* ORATION, *and to request a copy thereof for the* PRESS, *waited upon the Orator for those purposes, who politely expressed his* "sense of the honor which had been done him," *and complied with their request.*

AN

ORATION:

PRONOUNCED AT *WORCESTER*, JULY 4, 1798.

IN this DAY, FELLOW COUNTRYMEN, we celebrate the nativity of FREEDOM. We are this day assembled to commemorate the dawning of our political existence. On this glorious day, the voice of heaven announced to the world, that AMERICA dared to be free. On this ever memorable day, her name was recorded with the favored nations of the earth, who had successfully resisted the invasions of arbitrary power, and bid defiance to the vengeance of TYRANTS.

THE occasion, deeply interesting in itself, as the era of our independence, is yet more seriously important, as it recalls to our minds the *causes* which *gradually* produced, the effects which have rapidly succeeded this glorious revolution. As the joyful jubilee of our emancipation from the shackles

shackles of servitude, it awakens our liveliest gratitude to that GOD who directed our councils and guided our armies. As a solemn memorial of the feelings and principles which led to this great national event, may it indelibly impress, on our minds, the inestimable value of LIBERTY, and eternal enmity to TYRANTS!

A REVIEW of the events which preceded our final separation from Britain, a recurrence to the earlier scenes of our revolution, will emphatically display the *principles* which originated, the *feelings* which irresistibly urged this solemn appeal to the SUPREME ARBITER of nations.

WHEN our ancestors fled from the ecclesiastical tyranny of England; when they explored the untrodden wilds of America, in search of a peaceful asylum from religious oppression, ere they rested from their labor, the seeds of liberty were sown, with a solemn vow to heaven, that they would sacredly watch its progress and forever cherish its growth.

THE soil was found favorable to the culture; and the scion of freedom, though severed from its parent stock, here flourished in full vigor, and soon yielded to our fathers, who had so anxiously fostered it, the first fruits of their paternal exertions. They here tasted the sweets of unmolested repose; they here enjoyed, in *pleasing reality*, what they had so often contemplated, in *delusive theory*, the first, the most important axiom in nature, that MAN IS BORN TO BE FREE.

THIS ever living principle was adopted as the first article of their political creed, was inculcated with the earliest exertions of parental assiduity; and their children were taught to believe that they were born to the enjoyment of a life, free as the air they breathed. But, to their praise be it spoken, in the luxury of this hard earned repose, they remembered the nation, from which they derived their existence; and forgetting the persecution that drove them from their native land, the *second* lesson of their infant

infant education, impressed on their minds, undeviating loyalty and attachment to their king.

THUS early instructed in a knowledge of their rights and their duties, an inference, obvious and irresistible, forced itself upon their minds—that oppression would release them from the obligations of loyalty, and render resistance an indispensable duty.—That when the sacrilegious hand of a tyrant should dare to attack the vitals of their political existence, the voice of God and Nature commanded them to ward the blow and arm in defence of their freedom.

WITH these sacred impressions the colonies of America gradually rose into being; united among themselves by the cementing influence of similar opinions—united to Britain by the still stronger ties of filial attachment—long did their fealty support them with zealous devotion, in the service of their parent country. Long did they labor with unremitting ardor, in the advancement of her wealth and her honors. Long did this harmonious intercourse continue, undisturbed by the encroachments of arbitrary power, or the discordant clamors of sedition.

WHEN the dignity of the crown was invaded, the hearts of the colonists ever trembled with resentment, and their hands were ever ready to grasp the faulchion in defence of an injured sovereign. Impelled by the irresistible impulse of an instinctive affection, they advanced as a band of brothers, to protect the honor of a parent; and while the immortal CHATHAM successfully directed the councils of Britain, it was his pride to acknowledge, that to the colonies she was indebted for the rapid increase of her power, and the glorious conquest of her enemies.

WHILE America was now rapidly advancing among the nations of the earth, and, by daily accretions of wealth and of power, was progressively enriching and strengthening the British empire, a scene terrible and unexampled,

exampled, was gradually unfolded; a scene at which the guardian genius of Britain frowned with severest indignation; and, appalled at the barbarous project, fled in terror from her once favorite abode. A scene which displayed to an astonished world, a parent, with more than Medean madness, meditating the murder of her devoted children.

An entire revolution in the British cabinet had, at this period, produced an entire revolution in the system which related to the government of her colonies. The conciliatory councils of a Chatham and a Cambden had now yielded to the brutal ferocity of a Bute and a Grenville. The wealth, which Britain had derived from a long commercial intercourse with America, first originated the infernal machinations of ministerial rapacity, first suggested to their imaginations a scene of warrantable plunder, which would inevitably result from the subjection of the colonies. In pursuance of this object, a scheme was devised, intended to filch from us the last remnant of our freedom, while it consigned to us the consolatory task of contributing to the scandalous luxury of our plunderers.

To the phlegmatic mind of a German potentate; to a monarch whose measures have ever been moulded by the impulse of his ministry, it was easy to render it plausible, and establish the infernal project, by the mechanical force of his sanction. Secure of their prey, these harpies of hell had already sharpened their talons, and were now battening, in idea, on the spoils of their murdered victims.

A plot, thus matured in Erebian darkness, was first ushered into light, by the arbitrary assumption of a power, aimed at the very basis of our freedom. When the right of taxation was asserted, our jealousy roused us to a respectful opposition. We petitioned, we remonstrated, in language decent, but energetic. Our petitions, our remonstrances were answered by a charge of sedition, by a threatening appeal to the thunder of

their

their arms. But when this unprecedented violation of our rights, was succeeded by an act intended to enforce the arbitrary doctrine, the slumbering lion was roused from his repose, and roared *resistance to oppression*, in a voice that soon reached the throne, in a voice of terror that convinced his deluded pursuers he would never tamely surrender his liberty.

An immediate repeal of an act thus obnoxious, afforded a temporary relief to our anxiety. But alas! It was a momentary suspension of the plot. The last scene of this ministerial drama was not yet ripe for execution, and the managers, for a while, artfully delayed the closing catastrophe. But the signal was at length given, and the curtain was drawn. What heart is there that does not, even at this moment, shudder with horror at the remembrance of the sanguinary scenes which ensued! A horde of mercenary ruffians now darkened our land, armed with the implements of death; demanding at the point of the bayonet implicit obedience to the will of a tyrant.

But even at this hopeless period, our loyalty, for a long time, supported the conflict with our reason. The throne, that exalted pinnacle of royal depravity, was, even at this dreary moment, surrounded with supplicants, breathing the spirit of harmony, and an anxious solicitude, for the restoration of peace. But the monster was deaf to our entreaties, and HAVOC was the watchword of his ravenous blood hounds!

A RAPID succession of oppressive measures now blackened the records of a cringing parliament. The trial by jury, that fundamental attribute of our republican system, was repeatedly suspended by their omnipotent authority. Our lives and our liberties were daily exposed to the sanguinary rigor of military law. Our charters were sacrilegiously invaded; our legislatures tyrannically abolished. Our fellow citizens were incited to become the executioners of their countrymen; our towns were ravaged and plundered by the minions of merciless despotism.

But to perpetuate the remembrance of our accumulated injuries, or the patient endurance with which they were long sustained, requires not the aid of an annual recital. Their history is engraven on our hearts, and with the name of Britain, our pulse will never fail to beat in tumult, at the memory of her injustice. To attempt a detail of the progressive usurpations, which first led us to renounce our allegiance to the crown, is but displaying a series of unprecedented cruelties, which are already recorded in the first pages of our political history; a record, which, from the commencement of the conflict, has been sacredly deposited in the undecaying temple of fame; which she has long since trumpeted to the world, as an eternal reproach to the nation with whom we contended.

Can we ever forget the last, the most wanton exertion of savage ferocity? When our tawny brethren were beckoned from the peaceful wilderness, were instructed to search for the hatchet which had so long been buried; and wield it against the lives of their devoted victims. While our enemies, as if anxious to evince to the world, that a *Briton* could rival the barbarity of a *savage*, closed the infamous catalogue of their aggressions, by an incendiary deed that outstripped the fury of their fiercest allies.

The sun, which rose on that disastrous morning, that witnessed the conflagration of Charlestown, had not the age of miracles elapsed, had stood still as it did once in Gibeon, till we were avenged of our enemies; and veiled his face from a people, that dared thus insult the majesty of their God! The flames which on that fateful day rolled in volumes to the gates of Heaven, bore with them a record, which on the great day of accounts, shall be solemnly announced, to close the awful summary of British transgression.

The gauntlet thus being thrown; our dearest rights thus outrageously invaded; our lives and our liberties thus daily endangered; the crisis of our fate now called for a decisive effort of our courage. At this period,

deliberation

deliberation would have been the most abject cowardice:—At this awful moment, continued loyalty to *Britain* would have been the basest treason to *America*.

UNDER these solemn impressions, the watchful guardians of our nation, with a decent respect to the opinions of mankind, proclaiming the causes which impelled to the separation, imploring the protection of heaven, and appealing to the SUPREME JUDGE of the world, for the rectitude of their intentions, now boldly pronounced that we were absolved forever from our allegiance to Britain. With an undaunted firmness, that would have honored a Roman senate; at the same time, with feelings of humanity, inspired by reflecting on the melancholy cause, they solemnly pledged their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor, while they wept at the remembrance of the friendship, which was thus forfeited forever.

STRUGGLING, at this moment, with internal commotions, deficient in pecuniary resources, oppressed with national embarrassments, contending with an empire whose arms had made the elder world to tremble, our infant country was convulsed with the agonies of impending destruction. To resist the myriads of myrmidons, trained in the field of battle, who were now daily invading our once peaceful shores, we had only to oppose the desperate efforts of an undisciplined peasantry, who, till this period, had warred only with the stubborn glebe. But the GOD OF ARMIES had listened to our prayers, had decreed to us victory and freedom. Our earth then teemed with warriors, and, as in the fabled story of CADMUS, they once sprang from the teeth of the dragon, our fields bristled with armies accoutred for the contest.

To retrace the scenes of rapine and desolation which followed the footsteps of their armies, and the heroism which marked the progress of our own, is a task which has already roused the enthusiasm of the poets, the historians, the orators of the elder world; and although they have

cautiously palliated the outrageous cruelties of our enemies; to their praise it must be acknowledged, that, to the magnanimity of Americans, they have scarce ever denied a just tribute of applause. An eulogy from our adversaries cannot fail to soothe the melancholy remembrance of our friends who have fallen in the conflict; and while each revolving sun shall add fresh verdure to the laurels they gathered in the tented field; the cypress that blossoms on their graves shall bear witness, that their deaths have been lamented, that their deeds are not forgotten.

But for the heroes, who more successfully stemmed the torrent of invasion; who rested not from their labors, till the glorious work was accomplished; who sheathed not their swords, till they had vanquished the invaders, and driven them from our land; the grateful homage of a people rescued from Egyptian bondage shall be their eternal reward. A feeble repetition of a nation's plaudit would be but an ostentatious mimickry of those immortal honors, which are already registered in the grateful hearts of their countrymen. But while we glory in the achievements of a Washington; how painful the remembrance that the treason of an Arnold had well nigh baffled his exertions. Yet, though we blush that our cause was disgraced by this infamous apostate; with the true spirit of christians, let us leave his punishment to the upbraidings of a guilty conscience.

Great as were, at this time, the exertions of our countrymen; with the unexampled wisdom displayed in the cabinet; and the military ardor exhibited in the field, the struggle was, for a long time, dreadful and desperate. At this period the cloud, which had so long been gathering over our devoted country, was bursting in peals of thunder. The vail of our political temple was rent in twain, while the melancholy bird of omen, perched on its summit, shrieked in dismay, and portended approaching destruction. At this awful moment, the hearts of our bravest warriors were appalled; and we should long since have bowed our heads,

and

and been buried in the ruins, had not that gallant nation of heroes, who fought and bled with us in the glorious conflict, impelled by the voice of Heaven, rushed to our relief, and propped the tottering fabric!

From this moment the tide of fortune turned rapidly in our favor, nor did it cease to flow, till it had deluged our enemies.

The pride of Britain, thus unexpectedly humbled, the scheme of an ambitious ministry thus suddenly arrested in its progress, their nation groaning under the heavy pressure of taxes, their soldiers revolting from the unnatural conflict, the world, which had so often trembled at their vengeance, now exultingly smiled at their defeat. They now beheld Babylon in ruins, and saw this once mighty empire reluctantly suing for peace of an infant republic, which, with murderous hands, she had just attempted to strangle in her cradle.

Our vengeance appeased by the penitence of our oppressors, we cheerfully listened to the conciliatory voice of their sovereign, and with a mutual spirit of harmony, though on our part with an inflexible firmness, a peace was at length concluded, not less honorable to America, than humiliating to her adversaries. A peace, which secured to us forever the enjoyment of that boon, for which we had so cheerfully proffered our lives and our fortunes. A peace, which displayed to the world a new era in the history of man, from whence has since been dated the downfall of despotism and the triumph of freedom!

America, thus relieved from the convulsive agonies which so long retarded her growth, now sought for a renewal of her strength in the tranquil bosom of repose. But she had scarce enjoyed a momentary respite from her labor, when her slumbers were again disturbed by alarming symptoms of internal disorder. A general debility had succeeded the late arduous struggle; an entire derangement of her system was the

result

result of this premature exertion of her strength. An inevitable delinquency in the fulfilment of her pecuniary engagements, with a rapid accumulation of taxes, to supply the immediate exigencies of an exhausted treasury, had excited an alarming clamor which resounded through every part of our continent.

On searching for the primary cause of these complicated evils, it was at length discovered, that our national government was as deficient in energy, as it was discordant in its operations. That the thirteen planets of our union, designed to revolve around one common centre, from the want of a sufficient concentrating attraction, were continually jostling with each other, and disturbing the harmony of the whole.

To remedy this dangerous defect, the wisdom of our nation was once more summoned into action. The task they had now to accomplish, was to unite, in one grand national compact, the feelings and interests of thirteen sovereign, independent republics:—To secure the rights and privileges of all, while they rendered the prosperity of each individual government subservient to the promotion of the general welfare. To the attainment of this important object, our late feeble confederation was found totally inadequate. A new system was therefore concerted, and respectfully submitted for its sanction to the sovereign will of the people. That it might not fail from that want of energy, which had weakened the operations of our former constitution, powers were delegated, which, at first, appeared dangerously extensive, to infringe too far upon the sovereignty of the separate governments,

Among a people, who had been so recently taught in the school of oppression, to be jealous of every encroachment, who had so lately contended with domestic, as well as with foreign enemies, it is not, therefore, surprising, that a temporary opposition prevailed. The supporters of our federal system had to contend with the most powerful passions and

prejudices

prejudices of the human heart. But a generous confidence in the disinterested integrity of those illustrious characters who had presented it for their acceptance, at length lulled the suspicions of the people, and our triumph was complete by the adoption of a government, which, we trust in GOD, will permanently secure to us the enjoyment of our freedom.

YET, while we cheerfully concur in a merited eulogium on the authors of our FEDERAL SYSTEM, it is with pain we are compelled to remember, that a most alarming disunion of sentiment has, almost from the commencement of its administration, distracted our national councils;—that this dangerous diversity of opinion has been rapidly extending among the people, and unhappily created an opprobrious distinction, intended to designate the principles of political parties.—How painful! how distressing! that a people who have struggled together in one common cause; who have fought, hand in hand, for the attainment of one common object, should be thus embittered against each other, by the extraneous influence of foreign commotions!

YET, while we regret, that a late measure of our government has excited a general disquietude among our southern sisters of the union, let us congratulate *ourselves*, that among *us*, the late rancorous spirit of fermentation appears to be rapidly subsiding, and we trust, a general coalescence of sentiment will ere long restore us to our wonted harmony!

WITHOUT arrogating to decide on the merits of our late negociation with Britain; without hazarding a conjecture on its operation, or the possibility of uniting ourselves in amity with a nation, from whom we are now daily suffering the most insolent and unprecedented outrages—suffer me to express a firm, an unqualified reliance, in the quiet acquiescence of the people, suffer me, FELLOW COUNTRYMEN, to express a belief, that it will ever be the pride of AMERICANS, whatever may be their private feelings and sentiments, without remonstrating against the exercise of a constitutional

discretion, to submit, with a respectful deference, to the decision of their constituted authorities. But let us even hope, hopeless as may be the prospect, that the anxious apprehensions of its opposers may be relieved by its favorable operation. May the issue evince to us the fallacy of their gloomy predictions, and prove that the living embers of British resentment may yet be extinguished by this conciliatory effort!

But while we rely on this proffered pledge of their friendship, let us be constantly watchful that our rights are not renewedly invaded;—let us not be piratically molested in our commercial pursuits; let us not supinely suffer our gallant sons of the ocean to become the unwilling slaves of despotism; to be barbarously impressed to a service from which their hearts must recoil with horror.—But, by a spirited, a manly protection of our privileges as a neutral nation, let us announce to the enemies of France, that we will never become subservient to the cause we abhor.

While lamenting the temporary discord which impeded our negociations with Britain, we cannot fail to rejoice, that a general unanimity of sentiment has sanctioned the treaties which secure to us a peace with the savage tenants of our wilderness, and the yet more savage disciples of Mahomet, who have so long warred against the cause of reason and humanity.—That while we are again smoking the calumet, with the sachems of our western world, and are relieved from the embarrassments of a distressing and expensive war; we shall also rescue from slavery and wretchedness, our fellow countrymen, who so long groaned beneath the galling chains of heathen barbarity, whose lamentations have so often reached our peaceful abodes, and loudly demanded, in the name of humanity, our warmest exertions for their redemption.

Under a government, thus energetic in its operations, we now enjoy the pleasing reflection that our labors have been crowned with an abundant reward—and while on this day we offer up our annual sacrifice, at the

the ALTAR OF LIBERTY, let us solemnly swear, in the presence of that GOD, who has given us the boon, that we will never relinquish it but with our LIVES! Let us sacredly pledge ourselves to our country, that we will forever protect the rights we have thus secured, from the encroachments of *prerogative*, and the desperate efforts of *faction*.—That the blood, with which they were purchased, shall be the only price of their *forfeiture*, that we will never relax in our exertions to transmit them to our latest posterity, pure and undefiled.

IN thus reviewing the *causes*, which led to the event of this joyous anniversary, in tracing the *effects* which have resulted to America, in searching for the *principles* which impelled to the contest, in recalling the *feelings* which supported us in the struggle, it cannot fail to occur to us that the *causes* have not been confined to the limits of our continent; that the *effects* have extended far beyond the boundaries of our nation;—that the glorious example, with electrical rapidity, has flashed across the Atlantic; that guided by the same *principles*, conducted by the same *feelings*, the people, who so gallantly fought and bled for the security of our lives and our liberties, are now fighting and bleeding in defence of their own.

ON this day, therefore, religiously devoted to the consecration of our independence, it becomes us, as the votaries of freedom, as friends to the rights of man, and bound to support them whenever invaded, to turn our attention, with a grateful enthusiasm, to the scenes of their sufferings, their revolt and their victories. While exulting in the full enjoyment of peace and tranquillity, shall not a tear for the unexampled distresses of this magnanimous nation, check, for a moment, the emotions of our joy? They have sworn eternal hatred to tyrants! They have sworn that they will live FREE or DIE! They have solemnly sworn, that the sword, which has been drawn in defence of their country, shall never be returned to its scabbard, till it has secured to them victory and freedom, or is sheathed

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in their own bosoms, reeking with the blood of their oppressors! Let us then breathe forth a fervent ejaculation to heaven, that their vows may be remembered; that the cause of our former allies may not be deserted, till they have scourged their invaders; till they have driven them back in confusion to the REGIONS OF TERROR, FROM WHENCE THEY EMERGED!

WHILE we remember with horror the continued effusion of blood, which darkened the morning of their revolution, let us not forget that their vengeance was roused by the treachery of a tyrant, who has since perished on the scaffold; by the champions of despotism, whose lives have since justly atoned for the crimes they committed! While we lament the sanguinary scenes, which clouded its progress, let it not be forgotten that they arose from the bloody manifesto of a band of tyrants, combined for the hellish purpose of again rivetting the chains they had broken. The league of PILNITZ, like the league of Satan and his angels revolting against the MAJESTY OF HEAVEN, was professedly fabricated, to arrest forever the progress of freedom; to usurp the dominion of France, and divide the spoil among this band of royal plunderers.—Have we not heard, that the noble, the generous, the grateful monarch of the forest, that fawned at the feet of ANDROCLES, when remembering his former friendship, will ever turn with fury on his pursuers, and when robbed of his whelps, rests not till his fangs are crimsoned in the blood of the aggressor? Shall then the fervor of our friendship be abated, by remembering the transitory frenzy of a people distracted with the enthusiasm of freedom, and irritated to madness by the dreadful prospect of losing what they had enjoyed but for a moment? Let it never be said of us, as of Rome and of Athens, that ingratitude is the common vice of republics! Was it to the crowned monarch named LOUIS the sixteenth, or to the people of France, that we were indebted, for the blood and treasure that were so profusely lavished in our cause? Shall then their services be forgotten, in the remembrance of their momentary excesses? Or shall we refuse our most cordial concurrence in the feelings, which

which impel them to the present contest with the RUFFIAN POTENTATES of Europe? In the name of that GOD, who has so signally displayed himself in the advancement of their victories, let us remember they are bleeding in the cause of mankind! Can we doubt, for a moment, which is the cause we are bound to support with our sanction, when we behold the winds and the seas, those dreadful ministers of Heaven's vengeance, commissioned to advance their progress, and deluge their enemies? When we behold ARIEL, with his attendant spirits, gently hovering over their navies, and wafting them to victory on the bosom of the ocean; while NEPTUNE and BOREAS have combined against the league of their oppressors, to overwhelm in the deep these deluded followers of PHARAOH! Have we not seen them fed, as with manna from heaven, the waters divided,* and the walls of Jericho falling before them, while the fair prospect of liberty has led them in triumph through the wilderness, as a cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night!!

AMERICANS! Let us join in a fervent supplication, that the sacred charters of humanity, which we have once sealed with our blood, may be forever preserved from the deadly grasp of TYRANTS!

FRENCHMEN! Be firm, be undaunted in the struggle you have thus miraculously supported! Evince to the world, now gazing with admiration at your exploits in the field of battle, that you have virtue equal to your courage; that you are friends to the friends of humanity; that your arms are nerved only against the enemies of man. Let not the sacred name of LIBERTY be polluted by the frenzy of licentious passions; but may your present glorious constitution, while it protects your

 freedom

* IN the winter of the year 1793, while the French were marching through the Netherlands, and before the surrender of Amsterdam, a large river, which obstructed their progress, was frozen over at the moment of their approach, and gave them an easy passage into the heart of the country. It had not been frozen before for a great number of years.

freedom from the unhallowed ravages of tyranny, remain an unshaken bulwark against the destructive fury of FACTION !

TYRANTS ! Turn from the impious work of blood in which your hands are imbrued, and tremble at the desperation of your revolting subjects ! Repent in sackcloth and ashes ! For behold ye that have been exalted up to heaven, shall, ere long, be cast down to hell ! The final period of your crimes is rapidly approaching ! The grand POLITICAL MILLENNIUM is at hand ; when tyranny shall be buried in ruins ; when all nations shall be united in ONE MIGHTY REPUBLIC ! WHEN the four ANGELS, that stand on the four corners of the GLOBE, shall, with one accord, lift up their voices to heaven ; proclaiming, PEACE ON EARTH, AND GOOD WILL TO ALL MEN !

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